

The Falcon Focus

Volume 7 – Number 3 - Winter Edition

A MESSAGE FROM THE PTO PRESIDENTS

Dear Floral Street School Families,

We hope you all enjoyed happy, healthy, restful holidays, and wish this New Year bestows to all the same.

It is hard to believe that we are actually more than halfway through the school year!

The PTO has continued to thrive, in large part, due to your energy, enthusiasm and willingness to volunteer for our various events. We could not effectively enhance our children's education without the support of the Floral Street School community. We feel so fortunate to have all of you behind us!

Since our last message, we are happy to report that Magical Evening of Giving was a great time enjoyed by many. Our thanks to Joan Markham for coordinating this event.

Exciting upcoming events are ahead for late winter and early spring. The first ever grade level events are shaping up nicely and promise to be fun for all. A huge thank you to the PTO parent representatives who have been hard at work to assure that these great opportunities for Floral Street School families to socialize are a huge success.

The following is a schedule of our grade level events:

- Grade 1 - Tuesday, February 24, 6:30-8:00, Mardi Gras
- Grade 2 - Friday, February 27, 6:30-9:30, Beach Ball Survivor Party
- Grade 3 - Saturday, March 20, 1:00-4:00, Fun in Sun Beach Party
- Grade 4 - Thursday, February 26, 6:30-9:30, Spring Training
- Grade 5 - Friday, March 19 from 6:00-9:00, Friday Night Fever

As always, we would appreciate your assistance and support around these events to ensure they become a Floral Street School tradition.

Additional upcoming PTO sponsored events to look forward to include – Breakfast with Dad or Somebuddy Special, Earth Week Events, Hoop Shoot, April Showers Calendars, Fun Run Walk and Falcon Fair. Watch for details via the communication folders.

Please take note, if you have a moment, of our recently posted bulletin board located to the left of the main entrance...all the latest PTO news as well as our new PTO pamphlet – check it out!

Just a reminder: All PTO Executive Board positions will be open for nomination and election at the final general PTO meeting on May 18, 2004. Any of these positions can be co-chaired. If you are interested in serving in some capacity and have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact any PTO member. Our names, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses can be found on the back of the PTO pamphlet.

In closing, we wish to extend our gratitude for your continued support as we strive to nurture the relationships within our school community.

Warmest regards,

Paula Trabucco and Cheryl Mendelson

PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE . . .

Dear Families,

While membership in the Floral Street School community binds all of us together, I am confident that most of us also shared the common experience of recently watching Adam Vinatieri's game-winning field goal soar through the goalposts, bringing joy and a measure of relief to all of us who are Patriots fans. It was fun for me on Monday to hear the students buzzing about the Pats' Super Bowl triumph (and for once I didn't mind at all when it was clear that many students could have used some more sleep!).

Unfortunately, unsavory events connected to the big game were also permeating the news on that Monday—and were also likely the topic of conversation at bus stops and lunch tables. The raunchy halftime show (which, fortunately, I missed, as we were eating a Texas ribs dinner during the break) seemed to be generating more media coverage than either the Patriots' victory or the senseless, deadly mayhem that occurred in Boston during the "celebration" after the game.

I, like the vast majority of Americans, am disturbed by the television network's choice to present what is essentially "adult entertainment" during a broadcast that is knowingly being watched by millions of children. However, I am not surprised in the least. If you think that the lyrics and suggestive dancing during the Super Bowl halftime were inappropriate for children, take a look on what you find on many television stations during the after school hours or on a Saturday afternoon, or listen to some popular music stations during just about any time of day. The amount of sexual content that children can access on television and on the radio is almost beyond belief. It is no wonder that it has become such a challenge to prevent early exposure to a hyper-sexualized culture, whether it is through direct viewing and listening by children, or through what these children then share with their friends. Given children's natural curiosity, I can't stress highly enough the importance of supervising your child's consumption of media, whether television, radio, the Internet, or video games. I ask you to consider whether it's really a good idea for elementary-aged children to have unsupervised access in their own rooms.

I also was troubled by the reaction to the rioting that happened in Boston. While plenty of blame was going around, it seemed that it was being targeted at whether enough police were on duty to quell the disturbances, or whether selling alcohol on Sunday caused more rowdiness. What about blaming the individuals who chose to turn over cars, break windows, and assault police officers? Is there now an assumption that being a college student entitles one to wreak havoc upon the community because of the outcome of a sporting event? Is this what we should accept as normal in our society?

One of the reasons I have enjoyed rooting passionately for the Patriots is that they are a team that has class. It is well documented that the organization's leadership, from the owner to the coach, promote responsible behavior and have no tolerance for the poor citizenship that is routinely brushed aside by other professional sports franchises. The Patriots promote excellence through effort, teamwork, and perseverance: qualities that are excellent examples for our students. I would be pleased if their success had some influence upon the formation of our students' values. But, I worry that our mission of "building integrity in a respectful community" is too often compromised by the cultural forces that gave us the halftime fiasco and the rioting. It is up to all of us, together, to provide our children with the guidance necessary to set their moral compasses so that, when they are inevitably confronted with the choices of

whether or not to behave with integrity and respect, they make the right decisions. Our influence will in great part determine whether, when the Patriots win another Super Bowl in 2014, our children will be the ones breaking glass—or showing class.

Respectfully,

Joe Sawyer

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE. . .

“We need to stop hurrying children. Our school days require time. Time to wonder, time to pause, time to look closely, time to share, time to pay attention to what is most important. In school we must give children the time they need to learn. To hurry through the day, to hurry through classes, grades and a timetable of achievements, is contrary to the nature of children and will do irreparable damage to their minds and souls.”

Ruth Charney, Marlynn Clayton, Marion Finer, Jay Lord, and Chip Wood
A Notebook for Teachers: Making Changes in the Elementary Curriculum

Dear Families,

During a recent faculty meeting, teachers, specialists and administrators at Floral Street School discussed the importance of three key components to student learning. Mr. Sawyer and I identified and discussed what educational consultant and co-founder of the Northeast Foundation for Children, Chip Wood, terms the “**3 R's**,” in his book, Time to Teach, Time to Learn. During the meeting, the “3 R's” were defined in the following way:

Rigor

Research has shown that students who spend time on **fewer** ideas and concepts, but study them in **greater** depth, show **significantly higher achievement** than those who cover a broad spectrum of knowledge superficially. By rigor, Wood means being **thoughtful and precise** in planning classroom practice so that time is spent on learning activities that are engaging, targeted at **essential knowledge and skills**, and require students to develop understanding and mastery (in other words, not busywork). Wood says that this level of engagement makes the time pass quickly but feels leisurely because it is meaningful and enjoyable, not a forced march.

Recreation

Wood says that if our life is full of busyness, deadlines, pressure, and anxiety, we are less likely to **look deeply, think complexly, produce creatively, complete work actively, or be receptive to others' ideas and feelings**. Recreation is the recreation of energy by providing “breathing room” within the school day. This is more than recess- it includes **pacing** the day so that students and the teacher can relax and regroup after an intensive learning experience. It also provides the opportunity for the third R:

Reflection

Wood says that children go from one thing to the next without much conscious reflection because they live predominantly in the present, and that school seldom helps this. When the school day is rushed, we cannot be **empathetic**, according to Wood, as we cannot put on someone else's shoes if our feet don't stop moving. Wood says that being pressed for time does not allow us to see out mistakes, which is a key factor in becoming an effective learner. He advocates providing **periodic times** for reflection throughout the day, and ending every school day with a period of reflection. He also suggests that teachers must reflect on what they observe, and that taking time to observe each day in the classroom is crucial to student learning.

I share this with you today because I encourage you to be particularly cognizant of **recreation** and **reflection** at home. As parents and caretakers, we are constantly challenged by the issues facing our society today. Our children need us to closely examine and question the world around us through conversing, modeling, and spending quiet moments together, as we examine the stars at night, take a leisurely walk, or watch in awe as the waves pound the sand along the beach. We, the professional community at Floral Street School, are going to continue our discussion involving the 3 R's throughout the next several weeks. Time will be reserved during faculty meetings throughout the remainder of the year for staff members to reflect both individually and collectively, on maximizing the time we spend with your children. We look forward to sharing our continued efforts with you in the months ahead.

Thank you!

Jane Lizotte

NOTE FROM THE NURSE . . .

Sleep Needs In Your School Age Child

How much sleep did you get last night? I know as a working parent that I often do not get enough sleep. I know I feel better when I sleep eight hours every night. Just one or two nights of less sleep make me feel tired and irritable. Children who do not get enough sleep on a regular basis can feel this way as well, and also have difficulties in school as a consequence of being tired. The average elementary school age child requires at least nine hours of sleep every night to feel well rested.

There is growing research showing that lack of sleep on a regular basis can impact school performance and can have detrimental effects on a child's sense of well being. You may be aware of recent information provided to the Shrewsbury School Committee regarding school start times and adolescent sleep requirements. More information about this can be found on the Shrewsbury Public Schools web site. At all ages children can become easily frustrated, irritable, have focusing issues in school and with extracurricular activities, experience mood changes and have trouble handling emotions as consequences of sleep deprivation. Signs of sleep deprivation are

not always obvious in elementary age children. Some signs, in addition to those mentioned above, are difficulty in waking your child in the morning, sleeping for longer periods on the weekends and falling asleep during quiet periods during the day.

How can you make sure your child gets enough sleep every night? I know this can be challenging with our busy lifestyles! Try to maintain a regular bedtime for your children. Sometimes it is necessary to say "no" to activities. Soda is not the best choice for a child's beverage, especially in the evening as caffeine might make falling asleep difficult. Monitor what your child is watching on television. Scary TV or movies can lead to nightmares and anxiety, which can affect sleep quality. Finally, be a good role model for your child. A good night's sleep is a healthy life long habit, which can benefit you as well as your child!

~ Maureen Dodakian, RN

***PARENT CONFERENCE DAY:
March 24 (No School for Students)***

The second parent conference day will be held on March 24. There will be no school for children. Following the issuing of report cards on March 22, the focus for the March conferences will be on students who are not meeting teachers' expectations. As a result, there will be families that will not need to meet with teachers on that day. Teachers will be in touch with parents after February vacation with more specifics. As always, if you have a concern or question about your child's school experience, please don't hesitate to contact the teacher(s).

While not all parents will have the opportunity to meet with classroom teachers on March 24, the principals and curriculum and reading specialists will be offering morning and afternoon sessions to provide general information about the new elementary report card. In addition, there will be opportunities in both the morning and afternoon for "drop in" conferences with special subject teachers (art, foreign language, media, physical education, etc.) in order to learn more about your child's participation in these programs (individual conferences can also be arranged with special subjects teachers). More specific information will be sent home in the March Preview.

On March 24, child care will be available from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. for the duration of your conference(s).

LEARNING ISN'T JUST FOR STUDENTS ANY MORE . . .

It may appear to be just another vacation day from school, but Professional Development days provide an opportunity for teachers to further their learning about the best practices for children. The most recent Professional Development day on January 20th was no exception; the implementation of a new elementary report card has compelled teachers to look at their students through different eyes in terms of their progress throughout the year. What may once have been a grade based on a variety of different criteria that included not only assessment but student interest and teacher prerogatives, has been replaced by a grade that demonstrates a student's insight and understanding of content material based on state standards. How teachers do this individually as well as collectively across the district is a topic that requires a great deal of discussion, planning, and flexibility.

At Floral Street School, all Shrewsbury elementary teachers met by grade level to hear about and evaluate district-wide assessments for each content area. These were developed by their colleagues in earlier meetings. These assessments will ensure that teachers across the district are focusing on what is most important to the children based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. It will also create consistency among teachers from the same grade levels across the district.

The work is time-consuming but the process has enabled teachers to have a clearer understanding of expectations and grading for the report card. To further that effort, Floral Street School teachers continued this work in the afternoon by developing essential questions that focus their lessons, and help students understand and find meaning in their learning. Instead of saying, "This is what we're learning," teachers are beginning to help students find answers to the question, "Why are we learning this?"

Earlier in the year, Floral Street School teachers developed questions that were later used to shape an updated version of the science curriculum guides. In January, the staff began work on the essential questions for mathematics and social studies. This work requires teachers to compare the state frameworks to the district curriculum, and from there extract what is essential for students to know and be able to do.

Professional Development days have grown from informative to essential as the district continues to develop a strong curriculum base. With the first fully complete report card scheduled to be sent home in March, teachers want to be prepared. These opportunities provide that valuable time to move us forward as educators of children.

~ Carol Bradley

Curriculum Specialist

THE ART OF DISCIPLINING . . .

Tim Connors, School Psychologist

Each year I receive a great many calls from parents requesting assistance because they find that their son/daughter is difficult to discipline and control. These parents often report that they have tried various ways of coaxing and cajoling their son or daughter to adhere to their rules and expectations. In speaking with these parents they report having tried all kinds of strategies such as rewarding them, punishing them and even self-help books. However, nothing seems to work for them. Parents also readily admit that their child can exhaust their patience at times which leaves them feeling as if they are failing as parents.

If you are a parent who is wrestling with these difficulties, know that you are not alone. Disciplining children has always been a difficult task and some children, for a variety of reasons, can be harder to discipline than others. For these children, traditional rewards and consequences may not be enough to get them to comply. This is not to say that these children are “bad” or will end up taking the wrong path in life. Rather, they need different types of techniques to help them learn to comply. The three techniques that I strongly emphasize when I work with parents are (1), paying attention to good behavior, (2), giving effective commands and (3), using time-outs when needed. In most cases, paying attention to a child’s good behavior and giving effective commands are sufficient to effect the change that parents are looking for. Below these three techniques are described briefly.

Paying Attention to A Child’s Good Behavior

- Select a 5-15 minute time period to play with your child each day
- Interact with just one child during this time and make this your “special time” with this child
- Pay attention to what your child is doing during this time and use specific statements to reinforce the behaviors that you approve of

Giving Effective Commands

- Save commands for times you can follow through.
- Get your child’s attention and be sure they understand what you want from them.
- Do not phrase your command as a suggestion or a request, be direct and use a calm and matter of fact tone.
- Do not spent time explaining why you are making this command.

Time-Out

- When children will not comply to a command you can use time-out.
- Time-out is a period of time in which the child sits in a chair alone, without interacting with others, reading or playing games.
- Time-out lasts 1 to 5 minutes depending on the age of the child.
- Time-out starts when a child is sitting in the chair quietly.

I know that disciplining children is easier said than done. I also recognize that each child brings to the table a different set of circumstances and complexities, which need to be reviewed when implementing a behavior plan. If you would like to talk about discipline problems or other issues that you are facing with your child, please feel free to call me. In addition, I have found the following three books to be helpful resources for parents who need assistance with their child's behavior.

SOS! Help for Parents, Lynn Clark
From Defiance to Cooperation, John Taylor
The Discipline Book, Sears & Sears

~ Tim Connors, PhD

DISCOVERING LITERARY TREASURES . . .

Several years ago (in 2000), Floral Street School was the fortunate recipient of a state funded grant called *The School-wide Literacy Grant*. The intent of the grant was to enhance literacy practices among our students and community through funding professional development and purchasing key materials. As a result of the funding, many parent books were procured and added to the Parent Resource Center located in our Floral Street School Media Center. The books range in topics from helping children cope with stress (including death and grief) to providing parents with enrichment activities for giftedness. In addition, there are several books devoted to understanding and providing strategies for learning disabilities and Attention Deficit Disorder. There is something for everyone!

As a reading specialist, I am often asked to recommend books for children. Among the collection located in our Media Center are books that reference topics and reading levels as well as provide brief summaries. Two books that contain book recommendations for children are *The New Read Aloud Handbook* by Jim Trelease and *Best Books for Children* by John Gillespie.

I hope you will take the time to explore the many treasures located in our building. All of these resources can be signed out to you through your child's library account. As a school community our mission includes an ongoing partnership with parents in order to promote optimal learning experiences for the children we teach and love.

~ Patty Lambert, Reading Specialist

TITLE ONE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- *What is the Title One Reading Program?*
Title One is the largest federal aid program for schools. The goal of the Title One program is to improve the academic success of children.
- *Does every school get Title One funding?*
No – funding decisions are based on the number of students receiving subsidized school meals.
- *How do schools decide which students should be included in the program?*
Any child (regardless of whether they receive subsidized school meals) who is having difficulty achieving in class may be referred to the Title One program. An examination of the individual student's reading assessments and classroom progress determines eligibility.
- *What does Title One look like at Floral Street School?*

The Floral Street School provides Title One services to eligible students in grades one, two and three. Students are assisted with reading and writing skills in the classroom through small group instruction. The Title One staff, Maureen Henry and Lori Herring, work with classroom teachers to provide instruction and support to Title One students. This team approach provides supplemental services geared specifically to each eligible Title One student. Learning is supported in a variety of ways to improve reading skills, enrich the classroom experience and increase student self-esteem.

6. How can parents help?

Parents are always important when it comes to the success of their children, and the Title One program encourages close communication between parents, classroom teachers and reading teachers. The best support for all children's learning is daily reading experiences with the family – reading stories aloud and enjoying relaxed conversations about all sorts of books.

~ **Maureen Henry, Title One Reading Teacher**

READ ACROSS AMERICA DAY Tuesday, March 2nd 2004

The first phrase of the Shrewsbury Public Schools mission statement refers to “partnership with the community”. One of the best examples of this philosophy in action is the tradition of Community Reading Day. On this day each year, classroom teachers invite members of the community to visit their classrooms as guest readers. In previous years, students at Floral Street School have enjoyed listening to stories read by visitors from a variety of backgrounds such as: police officers, firefighters, administrators from central office, librarians and Scratch, the Ice Cats' mascot.

This year, the District Reading Leadership Team will coordinate Community Reading Day on Read Across America Day, which is sponsored by the National Education Association in order to celebrate the 100th birthday of Dr Seuss on Tuesday March 2nd. The four elementary schools and the Beal Early Childhood Center will be looking for volunteer readers for all classrooms. Floral Street School teachers will need to find forty-one volunteers who are able to give an hour of their time on that day. The community involvement is further enhanced by the work of the PTO hospitality committee who provide a welcoming breakfast for our guest readers. One of the most rewarding aspects of this initiative is the fact that our students hear how important books and reading are to adults in all walks of life. This gives an authentic context to their learning. As new community contacts are established each year we are pleased to welcome our volunteers back into the classrooms on a regular basis.

If you would like to be involved in this special event please contact:

Margaret Welch
Reading and Curriculum Specialist
mwelch@shrewsbury.k12.ma.us
(508) 841-8742.

UPCOMING PTO SPONSORED PARENT WORKSHOPS

- Y “Strategies for Getting Along with Peers and Dealing with Bullying”
Shrewsbury Middle School, Thursday 2/5 (snow date Thursday 2/23)
- Y “Sensory Integration and Its Link to Learning and Behavior”
Parker Road Preschool, Monday 2/9 (snow date Thursday 2/12)
- Y “Strategies for Effective Conferencing with Teachers”
Paton School, Wednesday 2/25 (snow date Thursday 2/26)
- Y “Strategies for Effective Conferencing with Teachers”
Beal Early Childhood Center, Monday 3/8 (snow date Tuesday 3/9)
- Y “Internet Safety and Search Strategies”
Shrewsbury High School Presentation Room, Monday 3/29
- Y “Helping My Child Become a Better Reader and Writer”
Paton School, Thursday 4/8

The workshops are held from 7-8:30PM. Look for more detailed information about these workshops in the upcoming PTO Newsletters, local cable listings, the High School WebEvent calendar and handouts that are sent home in student folders.

Make the Home-School Connection!

Rita Bolton - Program Coordinator
rbolton@shrewsbury.k12.ma.us - 508 841 8633

If you would like to submit articles or announcements to be included in the next Floral Street School Falcon Focus, please eMail your Word document to tbohush@aol.com.

SPIRIT OF SHREWSBURY FALL FESTIVAL

Planning for the annual Spirit of Shrewsbury (SOS) Fall Festival has begun. Committees are starting to form for the gala celebration, which has been changed to October 1-3 for this year only.

Art Dobson, Vice-President of the SOS, said, "In order to make the October weekend a success, we need many volunteers to help with the activities being planned. We need more participation and early commitment by the schools and town organizations. We are looking for people to help with the Town Common groups, craft fair, parade, obtaining sponsors and community contacts, distribute information, fundraising, and a dinner dance. Without sufficient help, the events will not be possible. Suggestions are welcome as to how the weekend can be improved."

Ideas are welcome about ways to improve the event. Contact Art Dobson at adobson681@aol.com. For more details about the Spirit of Shrewsbury Fall Festival, go to www.spiritofshrewsbury.com.

Next meeting

The next scheduled meeting for the Spirit of Shrewsbury Fall Festival is **Tuesday, February 24** at 7 PM, in the municipal building. Items on the agenda include committee reports and new ideas for the SOS weekend. To promote your non-profit group--send a representative to the meeting. For information on how you can volunteer for the Spirit of Shrewsbury Fall Festival, contact either Maria Smith (508-845-9974 or MMSREAL@aol.com) or Art Dobson (508- 842-2826 or adobson681@aol.com). Vivian Powers, Secretary, sums up the Spirit of Shrewsbury committee as, "a volunteer, non-profit, self-funding committee, comprised of dedicated residents from Shrewsbury. Positive and negative ideas are extremely welcome towards the success of the 2004 Spirit of Shrewsbury Fall Festival." All are welcome to help plan the town's festivities. Bring a friend, share your ideas, and help.



SHS Alumni Association Auction Dinner Bid on More Than \$7,000 in Cash and Prizes on April 10, 2004

Alumni, teachers, parents, students, and friends are welcome! See old faces.

Give back to SHS by benefiting SHS students. Donate to the Auction

Dinner, to be held this April at the new Shrewsbury High School, or attend this exciting event.

Proceeds go toward student grants and the all-new scholarship fund. The SHS Alumni Association

has awarded a total of fifty-seven grants to student groups at SHS thanks to generous contributions made through donations, memberships, and community fundraising events. The Association awards grants to SHS student groups to promote educational or charitable projects and to foster a sense of community.

<i>Auction Date:</i>	Saturday, April 10, 6 PM
<i>Auction Location:</i>	The new Shrewsbury High School, 64 Holden Street
<i>Menu:</i>	Salad, lasagna, chicken, broccoli, rice, beverage, coffee, and dessert by Creedon Catering
<i>Tickets:</i>	\$15 each until March 10, 2004 \$20 each after March 10, 2004 and at the door

If you mail in the form at www.shrewsburyalumni.org/auction.htm with your payment, your tickets will be held for you at the door.